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BRIEFING PAPER

Somalia Restoring Hope

By Ernest Harsch

Somali girl offers a traditional greeting as the first US Marine convoy enters Baidoa on 16 December 1992.

Introduction by Salim Lone — Food and medical supplies reaching stricken Somalis under the protection of international troops, groups of school children in Mogadishu once again returning to classes, and rival Somali leaders talking to each other at a United Nations conference after years of hostility — such sights have done much to reassure the world that the most immediate aspects of the country's tragedy are now being tackled in a more secure and systematic way.

Only a few weeks ago, the Somali crisis had seemed beyond solution, and as in so many other such crises recently, it was through the UN that the world sought to find an answer. To meet this particular challenge, the UN took a step it had never taken before: it authorized the use of force to ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief.

The resulting military operation, organized and led by the United States with widespread international support, allowed the full-scale resumption of the massive 100-day UN humanitarian action programme which had been launched in October. It was the repeated disruption by armed groups and factions of this and other relief programmes that necessitated the stronger action proposed by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The resumption of the 100-day programme under the protection of the international force has dramatically eased the plight of hundreds of thousands of Somalis. The process of political conciliation, essential to Somalia's long-term

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stability and reconstruction, is also under way with 14 Somali movements having agreed, at a January meeting called and chaired by Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali in Addis Ababa, to a cease-fire, general disarmament and the holding of a national reconciliation conference on 15 March.

There is still enormous suffering in Somalia and sporadic clashes involving the Somali factions as well as the international force continued even as the Somali leaders met at the January conference in Addis Ababa. And gunmen in January killed two international relief workers, Sean Devereux of UNICEF and Kurt Luftenberger of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). So clearly the struggle for security, recovery and rehabilitation will be a long and arduous one.

Nevertheless, the situation in Somalia now is vastly different from what it was just a few weeks ago. As recently as early December, the Somali people had faced a catastrophe the likes of which had confronted virtually no other nation in the last half-century: a quarter to a third of all Somalis were in danger of perishing from starvation and disease as a result of a two-year drought made infinitely deadlier by virulent domestic conflicts. Of Somalia's 7 million people, 4.5 million were in need of external assistance; approximately 300,000 had died within the last 12 months; and over a million had fled to neighbouring countries for food and security.

The UN, regional and non-governmental organizations had struggled for over a year to provide desperately needed relief supplies. But they were unable to do so effectively amidst the most dangerous conditions ever faced by such a humanitarian mission. Even food for famine victims was looted or demanded as "protection" payment, and relief workers themselves were targeted.

It was in response to this situation that the United Nations, on 3 December 1992, took a historic step in enlarging its international responsibilities. On that day, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 794, which for the first time in UN history linked the concepts of peacekeeping, peace-enforcement and humanitarian assistance. The Resolution gave the UN Secretary-General and Member States the authority to use "all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia." Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, who had repeatedly pressed the international community to do more for Somalia, had strongly urged the Security Council to take such action a few days earlier.

In adopting Resolution 794, the UN Security Council finally made possible the widespread delivery of food and other emergency supplies under the protection of international forces, formally known as the Unified Task Force (UNITAF). But given the depth of the Somali crisis, Mr. Boutros-Ghali indicated in a letter to US President George Bush — who had taken the lead in proposing to send a force of nearly 30,000 US troops — that the international deployment might need to be followed by "the first peace-enforcement operation to be carried out under UN command." Such unprecedented UN actions have made Somalia the bench-mark against which other international humanitarian operations are being measured.

But it was not always like this as far as Somalia is concerned. Especially during the first half of 1992, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as some international figures were scathing in their criticism of what they perceived to be a slow and inadequate UN response to the unfolding tragedy in Somalia. UN officials acknowledge that both the world body and member states could earlier have done more to provide relief, but assert equally emphatically that much of the criticism is based on incomplete knowledge of what the UN had been doing.

Financial contributions
to UNITAF as of 8 January 1993

Denmark	US $1,000,000
Finland	$70,000
Ireland	$115,000
Japan	$100,000,000
Norway	$1,000,000
Philippines	$5,000
Republic of Korea	$2,000,000
Saudi Arabia	$10,000,000
Singapore	$25,000
Total	**$114,215,000**
Goal	**$400,000,000**

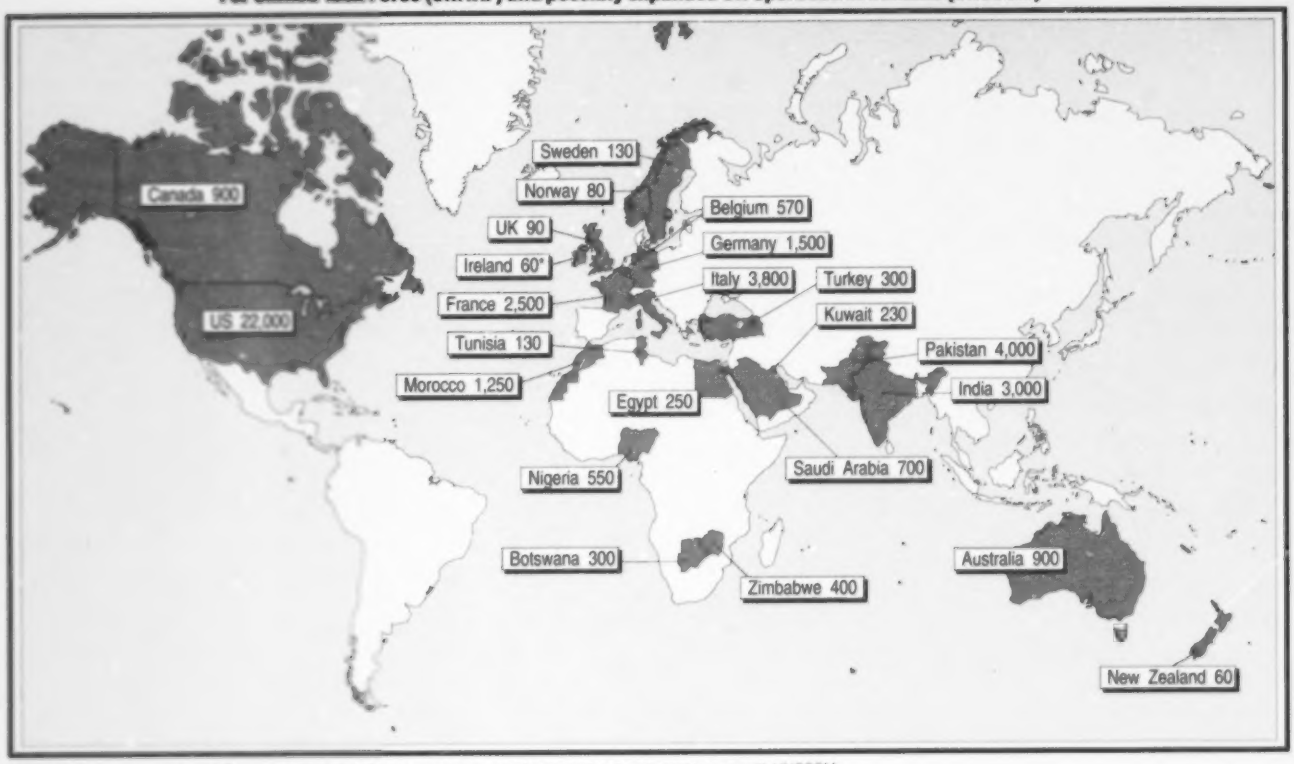
For example, UNICEF was pre-positioning relief supplies as early as April 1991 in neighbouring Kenya and Djibouti, and helping NGOs to rehabilitate health centres and water systems in Somalia. On the political front, there were missions and negotiations throughout 1991, resulting in a March 1992 cease-fire agreement for the capital. This agreement allowed UNICEF and World Food Programme (WFP), as well as the NGOs, to launch relief operations from March onwards. But chronic violence severely hampered relief activities, including the 100-day coordinated plan of action drawn up by the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, with the involvement of all UN agencies and NGOs. But the generalized level of violence, and in particular the shelling of a WFP ship bringing in relief food, led to even this programme being halted in November.

Somalia had in fact presented the UN with one of its severest challenges in its 47-year history. The world body was faced for the first time with the need to resolve a bitter national conflict without having a government or authority with which it could mediate — a situation not envisaged by the United Nations Charter. And traditional UN peacekeeping concepts could not be applied as there was no confrontation between two belligerent states.

Over the last half-century, the Security Council had developed a wide array of instruments to deal with conflicts

International troop commitments for Somalia

For Unified Task Force (UNITAF) and possibly expanded UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM)



All figures are estimates only. * Represents despatch of a transport contingent of personnel and equipment to serve with UNOSOM.

between states. But it had few tested mechanisms to guide it as it faced the world-wide explosion of internal strife that took root in the post-Cold War period. Numerous such disputes — most notably in the former Yugoslavia, Sudan, Liberia and Somalia — endangered the lives of tens of thousands of innocent civilians.

In the face of such widespread suffering, there grew internationally the demand to do more for populations imperilled by internal conflict. Influential groups argued that it was time to reassess the historic — and legitimate — concern about the sovereignty of nations when states were no longer able to provide protection to large numbers of their own citizens.

The General Assembly therefore decided in December 1991 to strengthen the role of the UN in humanitarian crises by creating the position of a high level Emergency Relief Coordinator. But as Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, who was appointed to that position, has written, tragedies such as Somalia and Bosnia have vividly shown how inadequately equipped the international system still is to deal decisively with humanitarian crises. He and others point to the Secretary-General's proposals in his *Agenda for Peace* — for readily-available peace enforcement units for deployment by the Security Council — as a way to reduce or defuse crises before they turn into disasters.

The situation in Somalia highlighted the urgent need for innovation in the international security instruments. Most of the country's civil life had virtually come to a halt amidst the violence: nearly all basic public services, including schools, health, water and electricity — as well as the police and justice system — had stopped functioning. But there was only a limited amount the world could do to provide large-scale humanitarian relief.

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali had begun to forcefully push Somalia onto the international agenda in early 1992, and the Security Council took a number of actions during the year to try to halt the carnage or at least provide emergency relief to those in need, including dispatching a force of 500 Pakistan troops under UN command (see details, page 12). But disagreements between factions, as well as marauding groups, frustrated most UN initiatives. It was then that Mr. Boutros-Ghali proposed in November a series of stronger measures which resulted in the Security Council's historic 3 December decision.

Despite the rapid improvement of political and humanitarian conditions through international actions, the effort at ensuring peace and reconstruction will succeed only through the sustained efforts of the Somalis themselves. External support for such efforts will be vital, but as Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi — who had co-chaired the Somalia meetings in Addis Ababa — has said, "the international community must take care not to trample on the self-respect of the Somali people."

I. INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS BRING HOPE

It was the violent disruption of the intensified UN 100-day humanitarian relief programme which finally led, on 3 December, to the United Nations taking a significant step in enlarging its humanitarian role. On that day, the Security Council authorized the dispatch of an international military force to Somalia to ensure the delivery of urgently-neededreliefsupplies.

Until UN and NGO relief actions were disrupted by violence, death rates had begun to come down in some areas from September on, and the 100-day action programme had been expected to make a further major impact.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had strongly argued for such action in a 29 November letter to the Council in which he pointed out that there was no other way to provide millions of Somalis with urgently needed relief supplies and to bring down death rates, estimated at some 30,000 a month.

These death rates had begun to come down in some areas from September on, and the 100-day action programme, launched in October and led by UN agencies and NGOs, had been expected to make a further major impact. But continued clan fighting and lawlessness made relief work extremely difficult and the shelling of a WFP ship in November led to the decision to deploy international forces. Since that deployment, relief workers have been able to deliver more food, medicine and other aid to hundreds of thousands of people facing starvation, in towns that had seen little food distribution in previous weeks.

Highlights of action in Somalia:

- More than 20 countries commit over 30,000 troops
- Multinational forces secure eight humanitarian relief distribution sectors in southern and central Somalia
- Fourteen Somali movements at UN-convened meeting early January in Addis Ababa agree on immediate nation-wide ceasefire, disarmament and convening of a national reconciliation conference in Addis Ababa in March
- Increased relief deliveries to ports and major food distribution centres
- NGOs and UN agencies step-up feeding and health programmes, further reducing death rates
- Third coordination conference on Somalia to be held in Addis Ababa in late February to discuss relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction

A highlight of this phase was the arrival of a convoy of 20 trucks of the UN's WFP, with an armed UNITAF escort, in hard-hit Baidoa on 20 December. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced in mid-December that it was able to resume food airlifts to Baidoa, Bardera, Kismayo and West Mogadishu after some days of suspension, and that on 16 December a French ship and ICRC vessel entered the port of Mogadishu with 15,600 tonnes of rice, beans and oil. As the UNITAF force has spread its area of operation, so the humanitarian effort has been able to resume its work in a more secure and systematic way.

In Mogadishu and through wide areas of Somalia, a relative — albeit fragile — peace has replaced the ferocious battles that once swept much of the southern and central parts of the country. The early-January agreement of Somali leaders in Addis Ababa to a countrywide ceasefire, general disarmament and the expected holding of a national reconciliation conference in March is reinforcing cautious optimism about the prospects for longer-term peace and political stability for Somalia.

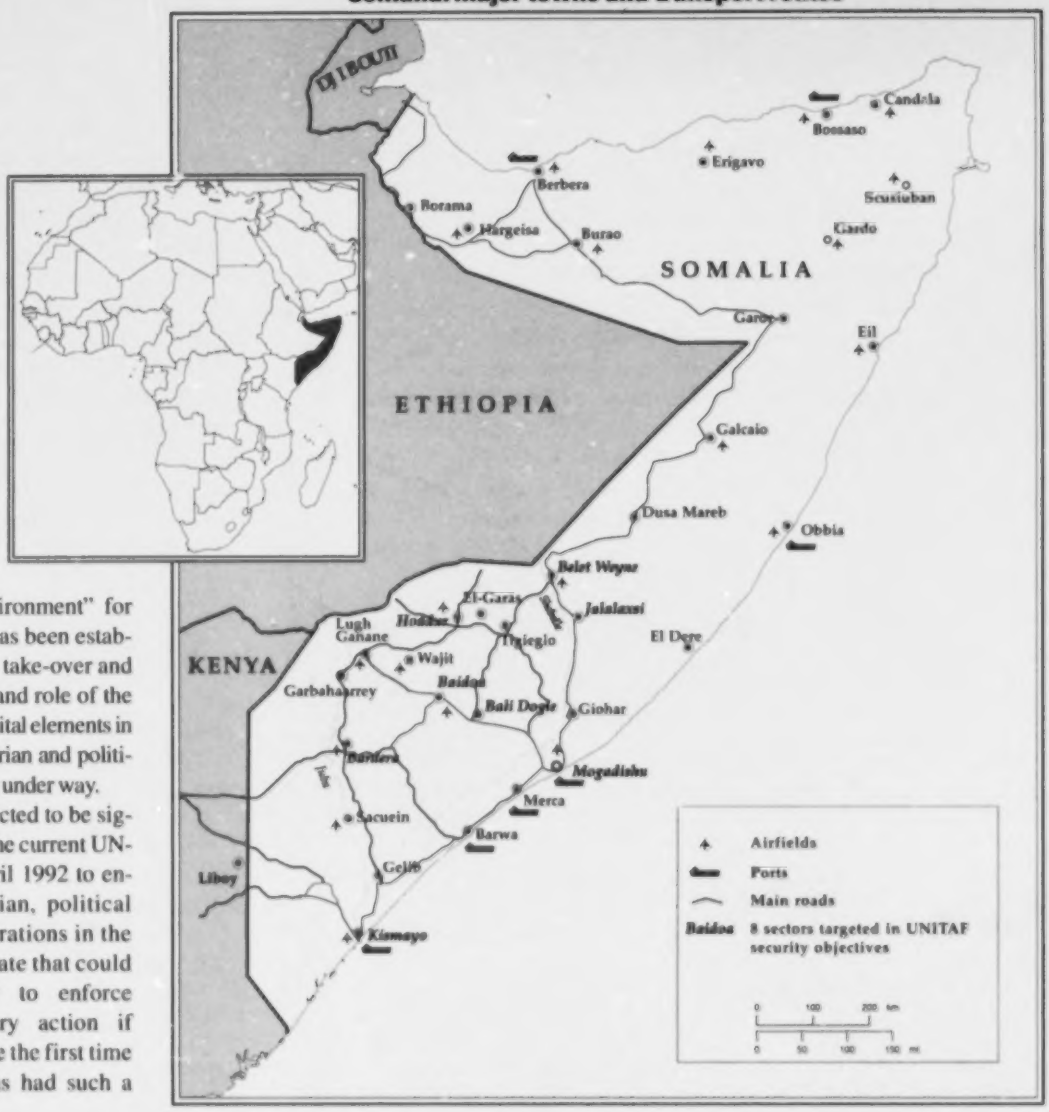
However, numerous dangers and uncertainties remain. Outside areas where UNITAF troops operate, lawlessness often still prevails — and with it hunger and malnutrition continue. There have been clashes between Somali factions and contingents of the Unified Task Force, as well as fighting among Somali groups.

A massacre in the southern port city of Kismayo in December underlines just how easily the battles of 1992 can resume. Relief personnel continue to operate under highly risky conditions — as tragically shown by the 2 January assassinations of Mr. Sean Devereux, UNICEF officer in charge in Kismayo and of ICRC's Mr. Kurt Luftenberger on 14 January.

In an effort to curb the level of violence, UNITAF troops have begun seizing heavy weapons and raiding arms' markets. The successful implementation throughout the country of the new ceasefire accord, with its arrangement for disarmament and the stockpiling of heavy weapons in particular, is crucial to maintaining the peace necessary for the distribution of relief and for economic reconstruction.

UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali had already strongly argued in a 19 December report that the US-led UNITAF force should extend its scope of operations from parts of southern and central Somalia to the entire country and that it should neutralize the heavy weapons of the warring parties and disarm the bandit gangs. Because much remained to be accomplished in achieving security on the ground, Mr. Boutros-Ghali also

Somalia: major towns and transport routes



warned against a hasty withdrawal of UNITAF forces. "It would be a tragedy," he wrote, "if the premature departure ... of the Unified Task Force were to plunge Somalia back into anarchy and starvation."

An expanded UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) is expected to take over from the UNITAF forces once a "secure environment" for humanitarian activities has been established. The timing of the take-over and the nature, composition and role of the UNOSOM force will be vital elements in maintaining the humanitarian and political momentum that is now under way.

The new force is expected to be significantly stronger than the current UNOSOM — set up in April 1992 to encompass UN humanitarian, political and peace-keeping operations in the country — with a mandate that could include the authority to enforce peace, through military action if necessary. This would be the first time that a UN-led force has had such a mandate.

Pulling Somalia out of anarchy and starvation was the overriding concern that prompted the UN to authorize the use of force. "The United Nations intends to restore the hope of the Somali people," Mr. Boutros-Ghali stressed in an 8 December message to the people of Somalia, the day before the first of the US contingents arrived in Mogadishu.

The UN's basic aim, he said, was to "feed the starving, protect the defenceless and prepare the way for political, economic and social reconstruction." While areas of security were being created to facilitate famine relief, the UN would also continue to work "towards long-term solutions for the problems of Somalia."

In this, the UN has received the strong support of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other multilateral organizations which have also been working for peace in Somalia and also from the NGOs working to bring emergency relief to the Somali people.

Responding adequately to Somalia's human tragedy has demanded action on different fronts simultaneously: security, humanitarian assistance and political reconciliation. With the launching of the UNITAF operation, a division of labour emerged for tackling these three aspects.

"The unified command is working to obtain security," Mr. Boutros-Ghali noted at a 14 December news conference, while the UN is "dealing with the political and humanitarian approach to find a solution to the problem of Somalia."

All three aspects are closely interrelated. Establishing some measure of security had become indispensable for the provision of effective relief aid, while alleviation of famine conditions may in turn help reduce political tensions and conflict. Finally, reconciliation among the

warring parties will be essential for achieving lasting security, ending the conditions that bred famine and making it possible to begin rebuilding Somalia's shattered economy and society.

CREATING A SECURE ENVIRONMENT

The UNITAF force authorized by the Security Council to deal with what it called the "unique character" of the Somalia situation is composed of troops from the US and a number of other countries, operating under a US-led unified command, in consultation with the UN Secretary-General.* Its main objectives, as indicated in Security Council Resolution 794, were to use "all necessary means" to achieve a secure environment for the provision of food, medicine and other relief assistance. A 17 December report by the US government, submitted to the Security Council, indicated that UNITAF would focus on "the areas of greatest need and suffering."

It specified that eight key centres in the southern and central portions of the country would be secured — Mogadishu, Baledogle, Baidoa, Hoddur, Bardera, Kismayo, Belet Weyne and Jailalassi. By 28 December, UNITAF forces had established their presence in all eight humanitarian relief sectors, from where they could move into the surrounding rural areas.

Although under the leadership of the US, which made an initial commitment to supply the majority of troops, the force has broadened out to become truly multinational. From the moment of its formation, governments from around the world began pledging their support and many announced that they were contributing military contingents of their own. Advance units from Botswana, Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey were among those to arrive in the immediate wake of the first US troops.

Over 20 countries have confirmed their participation in the operation, with an expected commitment of over 10,000 troops (see page 3). With such a response, the US has lowered its troop deployment from its original commitment of 28,000. Some countries have pledged financial support for UNITAF, with Japan paying $100 mn and $10 mn committed by Saudi Arabia.

The participation of a number of African and Islamic countries in the UNITAF operation has made clear to the people and political organizations of Somalia that the action is genuinely international and that its aims are strictly humanitarian, in solidarity with those suffering from severe famine conditions.

The UN has established mechanisms for coordinating its actions with those of UNITAF. A policy group on Somalia chaired by the Secretary-General, and an operational task force chaired by Peacekeeping Operations Assistant Secretary-General Kofi Annan, was set up at UN headquarters in New York, and continues holding high-level meetings with officials from Washington to discuss details of the operation. In Mogadishu, a small UNOSOM liaison unit has been attached to the field headquarters of the unified command, while the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia and head of UNOSOM, Ambassador Ismat Kittani, and UNOSOM Commander Gen. Imtiaz Shaheen are working closely with UNITAF Commander Gen. Robert Johnston and the US Special Envoy, Ambassador Robert Oakley.

In approving the UNITAF operation, the Security Council had also authorized the Secretary-General to proceed,

The basis for military protection in Somalia

Excerpts from the Secretary-General's 24 November letter to the Security Council:

"In the absence of a government or governing authority capable of maintaining law and order, Somali 'authorities' at all levels of society compete for anything of value in the country. Armed threats and killings often decide the outcome. Looting and banditry are rife.... Unless the problems relating to security and protection of relief are effectively addressed, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will not be able to provide the relief assistance urgently in the amounts needed now in Somalia."

Excerpts from the Security Council's 3 December Resolution 794:

"Recognizing the unique character of the present situation in Somalia and mindful of its deteriorating, complex and extraordinary nature, requiring an immediate and exceptional response.

Determining that the magnitude of the human tragedy caused by the conflict in Somalia, further exacerbated by the obstacles being created to the distribution of humanitarian assistance, constitutes a threat to international peace and security....

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, authorizes the Secretary-General and Member States ... to use all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia....

Requests the Secretary-General and, as appropriate, the States concerned to report to the Council on a regular basis ... so as to enable the Council to make the necessary decision for a prompt transition to continued peace-keeping operations...."

* *For further details on Somalia and on the relevant Security Council resolutions, see: The United Nations and the Situation in Somalia, published by the UN Department of Public Information, DPI/1321.*

The United Nations in Somalia

UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM)

Headed by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ambassador Ismat Kittani, responsible for all security and humanitarian operations in Somalia and for conducting political negotiations with Somali representatives.

UNOSOM Security Command

Headed by Brig. General Imtiaz Shaheen commanding 500 security personnel in Somalia, seconded to the UN.

Department of Humanitarian Affairs Somalia Office

Headed by Dr. Philip Johnston, responsible for overseeing and coordinating all UN humanitarian intervention in Somalia.

World Food Programme (WFP) Coordinates overall logistics and food deliveries by air, sea and land for other UN agencies and NGOs. WFP food deliveries to Somalia were over 92,000 tonnes by mid-December. Has 34 international and local WFP staff in Somalia; has assessed food needs in northern Somalia, and opened office in Bossasso in north-east to use the port. Seven staff handle logistics in Nairobi.

UNICEF Key UN agency for humanitarian relief; has the largest international presence in Somalia (75 officers). Supplies high-energy and supplementary foods for 187,000 children in 131 feeding centres with over 100 international and local staff in eight towns; provides cash, drugs, vaccines and equipment for 15 hospitals and over 200 health posts.

UN High Commission for Refugees Coordinates cross-border work from El-Wak and Mandera in north-west Kenya, and Jijigga in eastern Ethiopia to aid some 700,000 Somali refugees in 15 camps. Also aids 50,000 refugees around Sanaa in Yemen. Provides agricultural, water, and social services to help resettle them and displaced Somalis in Somalia; Its office in Hargeisa aiding food monetization, and de-mining with UNDP.

UN Development Programme has helped restore Mogadishu water supply and sanitation; is planning (with UNICEF) rural rehabilitation projects in northern Somalia; will help rebuild national administrative structures.

Other UN agencies such as FAO, WHO and UNESCO have been developing and financing projects in their respective areas of expertise.

at his discretion, with the further deployment of UNOSOM military personnel. Of UNOSOM's previously authorized strength of 4,200 personnel, 564 were already in Somalia, the bulk of them comprising a 50-member cease-fire monitoring team and a contingent of 500 Pakistani troops. On 18 December the Secretary-General decided to strengthen the UNOSOM headquarters in Mogadishu by an additional 100 troops. In his 19 December report, he said that UNOSOM troops were working together with UNITAF forces to maintain security at the international airport, controlling UN flights, liaising with UNITAF headquarters and escorting food convoys in Mogadishu.

ASSURING FUTURE SECURITY

Both immediate relief and longer-term reconstruction require security and political stability. It is with this longer-term perspective in mind that the UN is now addressing the question of the enhanced UNOSOM operation that will eventually take over from the present US-led forces once a "secure environment" is created.

The Security Council resolution authorizing UNITAF did not specify how this would be achieved. However, immediately prior to the resolution, Mr. Boutros-Ghali stated his clear opinion that "it would be necessary for at least the heavy weapons of the organized factions to be neutralized and brought under international control and for the irregular forces and gangs to be disarmed."

He also called for agreement on cease-fires throughout Somalia between the organized factions and for their heavy weapons to be concentrated in designated locations where they could be supervised, initially by UNITAF and later by UNOSOM. Additionally, he added in his 19 December report, since small arms are held by many individuals, ways should be found to induce them to hand in their weapons, he said. Food-for-arms swaps have previously been proposed as one way in which this could be done.

The political accord agreed in Addis Ababa follows the general lines of the Secretary-General's 19 December suggestions, with the UNITAF/UNOSOM force given responsibility for supervising and helping to monitor the ceasefire and weapons concentrations.

This is a large and delicate task, for which adequate and appropriate resources must be assured. The accord also implies the extension of UNITAF/UNOSOM operations throughout Somalia, a point again that the Secretary-General had urged in December. Unless the entire country has been secured, he said in a 8 December letter to President George Bush, armed groups would be able to simply withdraw to those portions not controlled by UNITAF, to await the force's departure before resuming their harassment and exploitation of the international relief effort.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has warned against a hasty withdrawal of UNITAF forces: "It would be a tragedy if the premature departure ... of the Unified Task Force were to plunge Somalia back into anarchy and starvation."

Somalia relief contributions (US $)*	
Australia	5,563,903
Austria	2,327,048
Belgium	12,125,152
Canada	6,799,125
Chile	10,000
Denmark	3,840,654
EEC	58,621,238
Finland	736,695
France	6,298,767
Germany	13,643,997
Iceland	259,259
Indonesia	2,506
Ireland	1,175,066
Italy	16,614,297
Japan	13,400,000
Libya	1,864,597
Luxembourg	1,015,153
Morocco	662,651
Netherlands	30,333,672
Nigeria	622,369
Norway	3,563,631
OPEC	1,000,000
Qatar	252,544
Republic of Korea	80,000
Saudi Arabia	1,278,658
Spain	680,000
Sudan	6,930,693
Sweden	4,364,788
Switzerland	134,196
Turkey	150,000
United Kingdom	29,894,040
USA	82,860,406
Sub-total	*307,105,105*
Grand total +	**335,268,591**

* Based on Department of Humanitarian Affairs appeal for the Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa. Somalia specified as recipient country. As reported by 13 January 1993.
+ including international agencies, etc.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali has argued that moving towards an imminent transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM, without first establishing the degree of security that could be maintained by a standard UN peace-keeping operation, would require that the UN field a force with a significantly greater military strength and a mandate to engage in more forceful action than previously anticipated. It would in fact be "the first peace-enforcement operation to be carried out under United Nations command."

While Mr. Boutros-Ghali noted that he himself had previously pointed towards such an option, it would have far-reaching consequences for the UN. Before such a decision was taken, he said, it would be necessary to ensure that conditions exist for a reasonable prospect of success, including the continuing support of member states, especially at a time when the UN's capacity to undertake peace-keeping operations has been "stretched almost to the limit."

General Maurice Baril, Military Adviser to the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, has indicated that some member states have already expressed an interest in providing troops and resources for the expanded UNOSOM operation if required.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Whatever the final decision on the transfer to a UNOSOM operation, Mr. Boutros-Ghali has made clear that "progress on the political front is a necessary condition for the United Nations to be able to assist Somalia in launching the economic and social programmes for rehabilitation and reconstruction which will be needed to support post-conflict peace-building."

It is especially important, he has stressed, to find "a framework that will enable the Somali people themselves to develop ideas and suggest arrangements for the formation of a Government in accordance with their own traditions and values." The General Assembly has also called for an international peace conference on Somalia under UN auspices.

Despite continued outbreaks of fighting, there had been hopeful signs of political reconciliation even before the Addis meeting. On 11 December, the two principal Somali protagonists in Mogadishu, Gen. Mohamed Farah Aidid and Mr. Mohamed Ali Mahdi, held face-to-face talks at a meeting chaired by the US Special Envoy, Mr. Oakley, with the UN's Mr. Kittani also taking part.

The two Somali leaders recommitted themselves to an earlier cease-fire between their respective forces, and also to removing their heavy weapons and military vehicles from the streets of the capital. On 28 December they met again and at a large public rally in the capital pledged to eliminate security checks along the "green line" that had divided the city.

Because of the breakdown of Somalia's normal social mechanisms for resolving conflicts among its various clans, lasting solutions to the crisis will also require steps to help strengthen Somali civilian and professional organizations and involve them actively in the process of national reconciliation, Somali leaders and UN officials have repeatedly stressed.

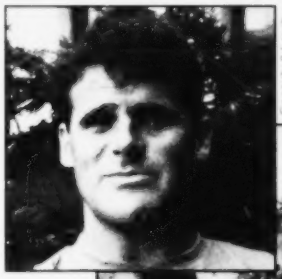
This was a prominent theme at the December Somalia aid coordination meeting in Addis Ababa, which was attended by a number of Somali NGOs and clan elders. A declaration signed by 26 Somali elders, calling for the convening of a national reconciliation conference, appealed "to Somali traditional community leaders, and other leaders, religious, political and business, to support and promote the unity and the reconciliation of the Somali people." A similar appeal issued by Somali women taking part in the meeting was directed toward women in Somalia, who have been playing an especially active role in holding together the tatters of economic and social life.

The Somali NGOs also pressed for a more prominent voice in ongoing relief operations. They urged the UN agencies and international NGOs to develop a closer partnership with local organizations and community leaders and to extend their efforts from the major cities and towns further into the countryside, where the majority of Somalis live.

The co-chairmen of the meeting, Humanitarian Department Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Secretary-General's Special Representative Kittani, affirmed that the participation of these Somali groups and individuals demonstrated that "the people of Somalia, with their proud traditions, know that the future of Somalia in the final analysis rests in the hands of the Somali people."

II. COUNTDOWN TO CATASTROPHE

While the crisis in Somalia only moved onto centre stage internationally in July 1992 after a forceful statement by Mr. Boutros-Ghali, it had actually been unfolding for some time. Two consecutive years of drought, from 1990 into 1992, coincided with an escalation of an already devastating civil war to wreck the Somali economy, tear apart its social fabric and plunge the vast bulk of its population into conditions of acute famine. The international response was initially restrained, with the United Nations unable to launch a large-scale humanitarian operation in a situation of political chaos and the absence of a central authority with which it could deal. Warfare and sometimes random violence repeatedly obstructed the delivery of aid, with relief workers and supplies too often the targets of warring factions. It was a period of catastrophic decline for Somalia, and the US State Department in February 1992 called it "the most acute humanitarian tragedy in the world today."



Cassidy & Leigh

Many relief workers have been killed in Somalia. UNICEF has lost two international staff members, Sean Devereux, right, and Dr. Martinka Pumpalova.

AP/ Jerome Delay

A UNITAF soldier provides protection for a food convoy through the devastated streets of Mogadishu.

The United Nations, which has the primary responsibility for humanitarian relief, was the target of severe criticism for what some contended was a slow and inadequate response to Somalia's agony. Mr. Mohamed Sahnoun, then Secretary-General's Special Representative to Somalia, told *Africa Recovery* in September that the United Nations "should have done better, that there was neglect as far as Somalia was concerned." Mr. Michael Aaronson of Save the Children Fund (UK) blamed the "lack of political will" on the part of the international community as a whole that permitted a difficult situation to become catastrophic.

While Mr. Aaronson stressed that his criticisms were directed largely at Member States of the UN, not at the UN agency personnel who carry out relief programmes, other critics directly accused the UN system of having allowed Somalia to sink into disaster. UN officials accept some of the criticism, but believe that most of it is based either on incomplete knowledge of UN activities in Somalia or on a lack of recognition of the many legal constraints that inhibit UN actions (see Section III, page 12).

Somalia's civil war had its roots in a fractious clan structure and a turbulent political history (see section IV, page 17). But the specific chain of events culminating in the total breakdown of civil authority can be said to have begun around 1988.

In that year, President Mohamed Siad Barre's autocratic government responded to heightened political opposition in the northwest by launching massive military reprisals against the local population, mostly members of the Isaaq clan. Bombing raids were ordered against Hargeysa, the second largest city, and with the help of mercenaries when some Somali pilots refused to fly the bombing missions, most of the city was destroyed and its inhabitants driven out. Tens of thousands were killed and nearly half a million refugees fled into neighbouring Ethiopia.

This brutal crackdown not only alienated the local Isaaq population, but also led to growing opposition elsewhere in the country and to further splits within the military and the bureaucracy. The conflict soon took on the scope of a full-scale civil war.

Witnesses to horror

Baidoa, Oct 22 — Three months after the world turned its attention to this epicentre of starvation, a battered red truck and a bus with peeling blue paint made the rounds of this town today, picking up shrouded bodies left by the road in the early-morning ritual of corpse collection.

The day's tally was 65...it was by far the lowest number of daily deaths in Baidoa since statistics started to be kept in August.

But the reduction in daily deaths in Baidoa, from a high of 360 last month, was greeted soberly by Somali and Western aid officials. Some suggested that the decline was because the most vulnerable — the young, the old, the sick — had already died. Now, they suggested, the famine was taking its toll among the heartiest. *Jane Perlez, New York Times, 23 Oct. 1992*

Mogadishu, Nov 2 — Somalia's children are dying by the tens of thousands because the civil war which has ravaged their country for 22 months prevents planting and decimates livestock. Fleeing their villages, exhausted families pile up each day at the outskirts of towns that have been transformed into places for dying. Those who do not succumb on the way often arrive in a state that leaves little that can be done for them. *Bertrand Le Gendre, Le Monde, 3 Nov. 1992*

Bardera, Dec 6 — In the midday heat yesterday, one of Bardera's 60 grave diggers dragged two small corpses wrapped in white cotton shrouds on a wooden harness along a dusty track.

In the distance, in the middle of a vast field of freshly-turned earth mounds, a colleague was busy with a pick-axe digging a shallow grave — his tenth before midday....

In an intensive feeding centre of sticks and plastic sheeting near Bardera's graveyard, at least a dozen skeletal children were yesterday sliding hopelessly and apathetically towards death from hunger and related sickness — too weak even to get up and defecate outside. A Somali aid worker approached a mother holding her dead child and gently took the girl out of her arms. The loss of a third child in three weeks left the mother too stunned to weep. *Julian Ozanne, Financial Times, 7 Dec. 1992*

By late 1990, the fighting had reached the capital itself, as the United Somali Congress (USC), based among members of the Hawiye clan, which is especially numerous in central Somalia and Mogadishu, mounted an offensive against government forces. The heavy fighting, including artillery bombardments of residential areas in Mogadishu, brought considerable death and destruction. President Siad Barre's position was drastically weakened and in January 1991 he and his supporters fled the capital.

An interim government was immediately announced, with Mr. Mohamed Ali Mahdi, a local businessman and USC leader, as interim president. But the new government failed to win general acceptance and to assert its authority throughout Somalia. This was despite an initiative by Djibouti's President Gouled Aptidon in June to convene a broad-based conference on national reconciliation and the apparent endorsement of Mr. Mahdi's provisional government by various political factions at a second conference in Djibouti the following month.

The Somali National Movement (SNM), an Isaaq-based group that had control over much of the northwest, was one of those that refused to recognize the government, and in May proclaimed an independent "Republic of Somaliland." This, in turn, was not recognized internationally or by the other Somali factions. While less marked by armed conflict than some other parts of the country, the northwest has also seen sporadic clashes due to rifts within the SNM.

The USC itself became increasingly divided, with one of the leaders, General Mohamed Farah Aidid, opposing Mr. Mahdi's appointment. This led to growing tension between Gen. Aidid's Habr Gedir sub-clan of the Hawiye and Mr. Ali Mahdi's Abgal sub-clan. These sub-clans had no previous history of conflict between them, indicating that the main impetus for the split was a struggle for political advantage among their respective leaders. The rift brought fierce fighting to Mogadishu once again in November 1991, with thousands killed, and a division of the city between the northern half controlled by Mr. Ali Mahdi and the southern half by Gen. Aidid's forces.

In addition to the numerous opposition groups that had formed in the late 1980s, and continued their struggles to assert control over particular regions, new factions also arose. These included the Somali National Front (SNF) in southern Somalia, based among former president Siad Barre's Marehan sub-clan, as well as an Islamic fundamentalist group in Bossaso, which has challenged the dominance of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) in the northeast.

As new groups emerged or old ones split, transitory alliances were also established, dissolved and reformed. Gen. Aidid's faction of the USC, for example, established the Somali National Alliance (SNA) with a few other groups. Complicating the picture even further was the proliferation of heavily armed gangs of marauding bandits, with little or no apparent allegiance to any political faction.

A SHATTERED ECONOMY, A STRICKEN PEOPLE

Somalia's economic structure was already highly vulnerable, with much of the population living in especially difficult conditions (see section V, page 18). As war and drought swept across Somalia and civil authority disintegrated, the country's fragile economic foundations shattered, exposing most Somalis to starvation and disease.

When the disruptions of war moved southward into Somalia's main farming areas, food production, already hit by drought, virtually collapsed. Irrigation plants, seed stocks and agricultural storage facilities were destroyed or looted, and agricultural inputs disappeared from the few markets that were functioning. According to estimates of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the total 1991 production of coarse grains (mostly sorghum and maize) reached only 245,000 tonnes, compared to 565,000 the year before and 633,000 in 1989. The land area under

those crops had also shrunk, from 815,000 hectares in 1989 to 450,000 in 1991. Since many farmers also raised some cattle, they initially were able to sell their livestock to withstand the protracted period of no cultivation. But by 1992 few had any livestock left, and were forced to migrate in search of food.

The nomadic pastoralists of the central region also had to slaughter or sell off parts of their cattle and camel herds in order to survive. More seriously, they saw many of their livestock simply die because of contaminated wells or diseases, which reached epidemic proportions due to the lack of veterinary services. Since the pastoralists' diet relies on milk and meat, many were exposed to severe hunger.

While the drought hit food supplies, the breakdown of government amid escalating fighting had crippled health and sanitation systems throughout most of the country. By early 1992, only 15 of Somalia's 70 hospitals and major health centres were open, and even they lacked medicines, equipment and electricity. Virtually all urban water distribution systems had broken down. As a result, deaths from diarrhoea rose sharply and there were increased risks of cholera and typhoid epidemics. In some towns where relief agencies instituted supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes, such as Baidoa, there was not enough safe water to cook food.

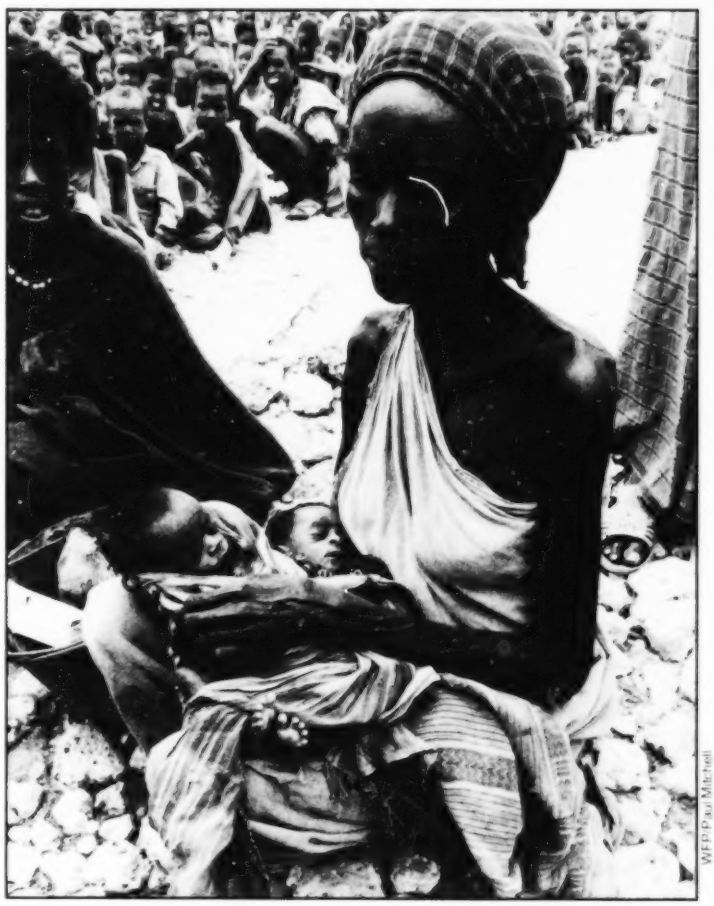
Since 1990, all schools in Somalia, from primary to university level, have shut down, except some primary schools in the northwest that reopened in mid-1991. The facilities were almost all destroyed or looted. Unless education and training are restored, "a generation will be rendered illiterate, unskilled and without hope," commented a UN technical mission that visited Somalia in August 1992.

Hardly any aspect of the country's physical or economic infrastructure escaped the devastation. All telecommunications stations were destroyed, and telephone cables in the towns were looted for their copper. Electricity-generating stations were heavily damaged, forcing Somalis to rely almost entirely on fuelwood for their energy needs, with potentially serious consequences for the country's diminishing forest cover. Industry ground to a standstill, and some factories were even dismantled, their parts and equipment sold off in neighbouring countries.

Somalia's largest towns were reduced to ruins. Many of Mogadishu's commercial and residential areas were heavily damaged by artillery duels and the continuing insecurity prompted tens of thousands of residents to leave the central parts of the city for refugee camps on its outskirts. Hargeisa still bore the scars of the 1988 fighting, with a UN technical team that visited the city in March 1992 observing that it "appeared very much as Berlin did at the end of World War II."

Markets still functioned in parts of the country, especially the north, but everywhere the scarcities of food and practically every other essential consumer good drove prices far beyond the reach of most Somalis. The entire formal banking system disappeared. Some private individuals continued to lend and trade currency, however, charging high interest rates and transaction fees. The Somali shilling circulated internally, but had no official recognized value; the US dollar became the preferred currency of Somali traders.

Untold numbers of Somalis were displaced from their homes, many having been forced to move repeatedly over the past two years. Until recently, the shifting clan populations and flight from the war zones were the major reasons for displacement. But as famine conditions intensified, more and more Somalis were on the move in a desperate search for food and assistance. Some 1 million became refugees, about 700,000 of them in neighbouring countries (mostly Kenya and Ethiopia) and the remainder in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Europe and North America.



WFP/Paul Mitchell

A mother desperately awaits food for her children. An all-too familiar sight before distribution of humanitarian relief improved.

III. THE STRUGGLE TO PROVIDE RELIEF

There has been widespread coverage of the dramatic improvements that have occurred in the distribution of humanitarian relief as a result of the UNITAF operation. The world is also equally aware of the scathing criticisms that have been made by NGOs and others of what they considered a slow and inadequate international response to the tragedy in Somalia. What is not so well known, however, is how the United Nations system and others were responding to the famine before it became the focus of international attention in July 1992.

Throughout the horrors of Somalia's civil war, UN agencies, NGOs, local associations and dedicated local and international workers had strived to maintain emergency relief programmes. As the civil war raged through Mogadishu in January 1991 and the Siad Barre government was crumbling, virtually all foreign embassies, UN agencies and most non-Somali relief and development organizations evacuated their expatriate staff from the capital. And as famine conditions worsened in the following months of spreading warfare, information on the scope of the crisis was not as readily available to UN agencies and donors that provide relief aid.

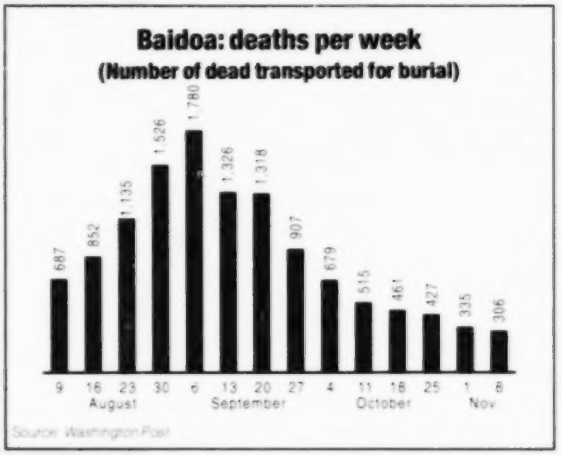
NGOs at the forefront of relief efforts

Most of the actual relief work at grassroots level has been done in the past two years by some 31 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), their local staff, and a dozen Somali NGOs. The UN Secretary-General acknowledged the "critical role" of the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),** and such NGOs as **Save the Children Fund (SCF), CARE, Concern,** and **Médecins sans frontières (MSF)** most of which stayed in Somalia during the heaviest fighting, and expanded their operations as the famine worsened. Working with community elders, doctors and others, NGOs have delivered food, nutrition and health services, and aided government health and agriculture departments.

The ICRC has the largest programme, with medical and veterinary services, seed distribution and, with numerous Somali (and mainly women) local staff, over 800 kitchens feeding a million people a day. The SCF has several clinics along with supplementary feeding and immunization programmes. It also provides technical advisors and inputs for rehabilitation in the health, education and agriculture sectors. CARE distributes WFP shipments in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Bardera and numerous villages in the Bay, Berdale, Gedo and Bakol regions, and has distributed seeds to over 35,000 farm families. To help promote longer-term recovery, CARE, **Concern, Oxfam-UK** and other NGOs have been distributing seeds and tools to farmers in the Bay, Gedo, Bakol and Jubaland regions. These NGOs also work with returnee and displaced farmers to repair irrigation canals, water supply and sanitation facilities.

NGOs such as MSF and the **International Medical Corps** have surgical and medical teams at hospitals and health posts, along with immunization, water, sanitation and nutrition programmes in key towns and villages. Besides training medical personnel, they are also developing a chain of cold stores for vaccines. **Pharmaciens sans frontières** is setting up a French and European Community-funded central pharmacy with supplies from WHO and UNICEF airlifted by WFP to major depots in Djibouti, Nairobi and Mogadishu.

The **Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA)** and the **Islamic Call Organization (DAWA)** also distribute food, and run health and feeding centres, while the IARA has also given out seeds. Cross-border operations by NGOs include feeding programmes run by **Catholic Relief Services** in conjunction with ICRC from Kenya into Somalia's Gedo region, while the **International Red Crescent** is planning a similar operation out of Liboi, Kenya.



Until their disruption by violence in November, UN and NGO relief efforts were helping reduce death rates.

However, UN organizations tried to ensure a steady inflow of funds and relief inputs to sustain projects with NGOs and relief organizations like the ICRC that remained in Somalia throughout the most dangerous periods.

By exposing themselves to considerable risk, the dedicated volunteers of the ICRC, Save the Children Fund (SCF), CARE, Concern and other NGOs played an indispensable role in the early months of 1991, providing food and medical care to many thousands of Somalis who would otherwise have succumbed (see box).

Their efforts were aided by UNICEF and its local staff, for example, who had helped rehabilitate Hargeisa's water

system by March 1991, and also reopen some health centres in Mogadishu. It recruited and deployed expatriate nurses for NGO nutrition and health programmes, pre-positioned relief supplies in Djibouti and Kenya, and launched emergency operations in Berbera in April. Work with local and international NGOs in northern Somalia continued in May with immunization campaigns in Hargeisa, Berbera and Erigavo, and repairs to Berbera's water supply. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also continued to aid returnees and fund mine-clearing operations in the north-west.

Some of these initiatives were based on information gathered in March 1991 by UNICEF's Somalia representative Mr. David Bassiouni, and its regional director Ms. Mary Racelis, when they visited Somalia on the first UN flight since the evacuation. They also initiated discussion with various authorities in Mogadishu in April and May aimed at facilitating UN relief operations. Further talks through a UN inter-agency mission to Somalia in May led to a the return of a few UN staff to Mogadishu in June 1991. WFP and ICRC had also been collaborating to get relief to target areas, with WFP focusing on Mogadishu and northern Somalia, while ICRC used 18 different entry points to distribute relief in southern Somalia and rural areas.

Fuller operations began in August as UN offices reopened in Mogadishu, but were again suspended as intensified fighting between factions in the capital forced another evacuation of UN staff in mid-November.

Throughout this period, UNICEF pressed for authorization to return to Mogadishu. It was able to do so following an unprecedented dispensation on 24 December, 1991, by then UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar to re-establish its presence in Mogadishu despite the high security risks. UNICEF expanded support for local NGOs in the capital, reactivated work in clinics in northern Somalia, on water and educational facilities, and support for nutritional work in Kismayo.

Even after the January 1992 murder of UNICEF Doctor Martinka Pumpalova in Bossasso and deteriorating security forced a suspension of its north-eastern operations, UNICEF repaired a landing strip in northern Mogadishu in February to ensure supplies to both sides of the divided city. UNICEF relief flights starting from January 1992 brought in over 800 tons of medical supplies, shelter material, supplementary food and water equipment, while WFP airlifts from Nairobi in late February-early March brought in another 256 tons of drugs and shelter materials.

The UN issued periodic appeals to donors to contribute food and financing for relief activities in Somalia, but with only a mixed response. By early 1992, the ICRC, the largest of the relief agencies active in the country, was sounding an increasingly urgent alarm, warning that a severe famine was

Chronology of a crisis

1960 — Former British Somaliland gains independence 26 June, joined on 1 July oy former Italian Somaliland to establish Somali Republic.

October 1969 — Gen. Mohamed Siad Barre seizes power in military coup.

1977-78 — War with Ethiopia over Ogaden region, ending in Somalia's defeat.

1988 — Isaaq-based Somali National Movement intensifies rebellion in northwest. Government bombardments destroy Hargeisa, killing tens of thousands.

January 1991 — President Siad Barre ousted by Hawiye-based United Somali Congress (USC). Mr. Mohamed Ali Mahdi's faction of USC proclaims interim government, but challenged by other factions. Large-scale violence prompts evacuation of UN and other international personnel from Mogadishu; some relief operations continue mainly in north.

March — UNICEF team visits Mogadishu to evaluate security and deliver relief supplies to NGOs.

May — Somali National Movement proclaims independent state of Somaliland in northwest; not recognized by any country. Limited reopening of UN offices in Mogadishu in May and August.

May-August — Limited return of UN personnel to Mogadishu.

June — FAO reports depletion of food stocks in urban areas, worsening rural food shortages and starvation deaths.

November — Fighting erupts in Mogadishu between USC factions led by General Aidid and Mr. Ali Mahdi. New evacuation of UN personnel.

December — UN authorizes UNICEF to reopen Mogadishu offices.

January 1992 — Security Council imposes arms embargo on Somalia.

February — ICRC warns famine is "on the horizon." Several Somali factions meet under UN aegis in New York to discuss cease-fire.

March — Cease-fire between USC factions takes effect in Mogadishu. WFP and UNICEF begin joint airlift of supplementary food into Somalia.

8-9 April — Summit of heads of state of Horn of Africa in Addis Ababa discusses regional cooperation on famine, refugee and other humanitarian problems.

April — Security Council creates UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), agreeing to deploy 50 unarmed cease-fire monitors and in principle to 500 UN soldiers to protect relief operations.

31 May-3 June — Leaders of many Somali parties meet in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, and pledge cooperation with international relief efforts.

27 July — Following 22 July report by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Security Council approves urgent UN relief airlift.

28 August — Security Council authorizes expansion of UNOSOM to 4,200 security personnel.

14 September — First of 500 Pakistani UNOSOM troops arrive in Mogadishu.

12-13 October — UN's 100-Day Action Programme for accelerated humanitarian assistance to Somalia launched.

24 November — WFP ship shelled in Mogadishu harbour. Mr. Boutros-Ghali warns Security Council effective relief impossible under such conditions, and presents options for "more forceful action" to Security Council.

3 December — Council authorizes dispatch of international military force to Somalia to create a "secure environment" for relief operations.

3-5 December — Somalia aid coordination meeting in Addis Ababa; Somali participants call for national reconciliation.

9 December — First contingents of multinational task force arrive in Somalia., securing port and airport.

4-15 January 1993 — 14 Somali political groups at UN-sponsored meeting in Addis Ababa agree on cease-fire, disarmament and reconciliation conference.

"on the horizon" in Somalia. "The fate of the Somali people lies in the hands of the international community," the ICRC argued in a March appeal, as violence and insecurity continued to hamper local distribution of relief.

It took a UN-brokered cease-fire in Mogadishu that month to enable UNICEF to step up deliveries of emergency medical and other supplies to Somali NGOs. Lengthier but ultimately successful negotiations led by then Special Representative Mohamed Sahnoun were also required before a WFP food shipment was able to dock safely at Mogadishu port in early May, the first since 17 September 1991.

From this point on, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC and NGOs struggled to combat an escalating famine amid continuing insecurity. Outside Somalia, UNHCR was handling a rising flow of refugees. At the same time, with the presence in Somalia of Mr. Sahnoun, the UN undertook a number of humanitarian and political initiatives, including the establishment of UNOSOM, to improve the effectiveness of relief activities.

UN/Andrew Beswick

Somali elders at UN conference in Addis Ababa in December 1992.

These efforts yielded limited success, with death rates falling in some areas. But the enormity of the humanitarian task required a much larger and more coordinated operation, and in October, the UN launched the "100-Day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance for Somalia." This was designed to flood Somalia with aid at a time when food had become a priceless weapon in the fighting between clans and armed gangs.

WFP and ICRC were to provide some 50,000 tonnes of food a month to the central and southern regions. At the same time, UNICEF would increase its already extensive supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes for children. Backing this programme would be coordinated efforts by other UN agencies and NGOs, such as seed distribution and rehabilitation of infrastructure.

The programme reflected strong collaboration between the UN system, NGOs and other relief organizations, symbolized by the appointment of CARE USA president Philip Johnston as Operational Manager of the programme. It followed a September visit to Somalia by a high-level delegation led by Mr. Jan Eliasson, head of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA).

Despite the continued efforts of Mr. Sahnoun to maintain agreements by the warring factions on the uninterrupted distribution of relief supplies, the renewed humanitarian drive was badly disrupted by continuing insecurity and persistent looting. In a review covering the first 38 days of the programme, the DHA acknowledged that "even the short-term needs are not being met," despite enough food being available, either from new donor pledges or previous stocks.

Against a monthly target of 31,000 tonnes of food deliveries by WFP, only some 18,700 tonnes could be delivered because the ports of Mogadishu and Kismayo were closed for part of that time due to fighting. The ICRC, however, was able to deliver 40,200 tonnes by sea, road and air, against a planned target of 19,150 tonnes per month. Of these deliveries, the DHA reported, in many instances "less than 20 per cent" actually reached targeted beneficiaries, because of looting and diversion by gangs.

In areas where food could be distributed, deaths from starvation, while still at high levels, were substantially reduced. UNICEF was able to increase its supplementary feeding programmes to cover some 125,000 malnourished children, up from 52,000 in August.

October had shown how the shifting tides of the civil war were directly affecting ordinary people when the south-western town of Bardera abruptly changed hands during fighting between two military factions. Because food stocks were looted and many relief personnel were forced to evacuate, death rates from starvation and disease suddenly soared as high as 300 a day, from about 60 a day.

Although UNOSOM forces were now in Somalia, no agreement could be reached with the local militias on their

deployment to guard food convoys. Pictures of starving children were now coupled with those of bags of food aid, warehoused because of lack of security for their distribution. In November, despite an apparent agreement on the use of the previously closed Mogadishu port, a WFP ship was shelled. It was at this point that the Secretary-General called for new and unprecedented action to ensure the safe delivery of food to Somalia's starving people.

UN Andrew Brenck

Opening session of humanitarian operations conference on Somalia, Addis Ababa, 3 December 1992. From left: Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson; Special Representative Ismat Kittani; Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi; OAU Secretary-General Salim Salim; and ECA Executive Secretary Layashi Yaker

POLITICAL INITIATIVES

It was at the request of Mr. Omar Arteh Ghalib, the Prime Minister in Mr. Mahdi's provisional government, that the Security Council in January 1992 took up the crisis in Somalia for the first time, calling on all countries to observe a complete embargo on any deliveries of arms or military equipment to the country. Subsequently, a mission to Mogadishu by UN Under-Secretary-General James Jonah that same month, led to talks at the UN in New York in February among leaders of several of the key Somali political groupings. A joint delegation from the UN and regional organizations visited Mogadishu shortly thereafter and persuaded both Gen. Aidid and Mr. Ali Mahdi to sign a formal ceasefire early in March. That ceasefire generally held in the capital, although fighting continued elsewhere in the country and some unaffiliated armed gangs still roamed Mogadishu itself.

Parallel efforts were made by the UN, Organization of African Unity, League of Arab States, other regional organizations and neighbouring governments towards a broader political settlement. From 31 May to 3 June 1992 leaders from some of the main movements met in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, at the invitation of the Standing Committee of the Horn of Africa, formed by a number of regional governments, to work towards a political solution and address humanitarian concerns.

Meanwhile, Mr. Boutros-Ghali forcefully pushed to put Somalia higher up on the international agenda. In two reports to the Security Council in March and April 1992, he observed that the "extraordinarily complex" situation in Somalia had "so far eluded conventional solutions" to providing humanitarian relief. He urged the Security Council to adopt "new avenues and innovative methods," specifically proposing the launching of UNOSOM, to be composed of two components: a 50-member ceasefire monitoring unit and a contingent of approximately 500 security personnel to protect relief operations in the Mogadishu area. On 24 April the Security Council agreed to establish UNOSOM, approved the dispatch of the monitors and also agreed, in principle, to sending a security force, although some member states questioned the costs of such a force.

Alarmed by the continued deterioration in Somalia and the tendency of some member states to focus primarily on other crises, such as the one in the Balkans, Mr. Boutros-Ghali even more forcefully challenged the world community to turn the spotlight towards Somalia. In two further reports, in July and August, he pressed the Council to strengthen UNOSOM and expand it to cover the entire country. "Lack of security prevents the delivery of food, while food shortages contribute significantly to the level of violence and insecurity," he argued. "The immediate need is to break this vicious cycle." UNOSOM, he proposed, should encompass humanitarian activities, cease-fire monitoring, the ensuring of security, demobilization and disarmament, and the promotion of peace and national reconciliation. The Security Council agreed, expanding UNOSOM to 4,200 troops, to be deployed in four different zones of the country, in addition to Mogadishu.

UNOSOM was conceived as a conventional UN peacekeeping operation, which meant that deployment could only proceed with the agreement of the Somali authorities. Since there was no national government, this involved separate negotiations with local leaders in the areas where UNOSOM hoped to operate. The talks were difficult and time-consuming, however, hindering prompt deployment. The first unit of UNOSOM security personnel, a contingent of 500 Pakistani troops, did not reach Mogadishu until September. Subsequently, Gen. Aidid, who had previously agreed to their deployment, raised new objections. He also

demanded the expulsion from Somalia of UNOSOM's humanitarian aid coordinator, Mr. David Bassiouni.

The Pakistani battalion finally took control of the airport on 10 November. On the UN Secretary-General's explicit instructions, his Special Representative, Mr. Ismat Kittani (who had recently taken over on the resignation of Mr. Sahnoun), rejected Gen. Aidid's demands that they be withdrawn. Three days later the airport came under heavy machine-gun, recoilless rifle and mortar fire, but the Pakistani troops held their ground.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ali Mahdi threatened to shell any ships that tried to dock at Mogadishu port. He agreed on 23 November to allow a resumption of port activities, but the following day a WFP ship carrying 10,000 tonnes of grain and other humanitarian supplies was shelled as it attempted to enter the port, setting the bridge on fire.

"Given this latest outrageous incident," declared WFP Director Catherine Bertini, "WFP has been forced to stop trying to ship relief supplies through the port of Mogadishu until we have guaranteed security for our relief operation. It is appalling that even today people are dying in unprecedented numbers in Somalia because gunmen will not allow relief to flow into the country unhindered."

In the capital and other areas, UN agencies and NGOs were confronted with extortion demands to allow them to operate and were compelled to make large "protection" payments to armed Somali escorts. Bribes were demanded at ports, airports and the innumerable roadblocks around the country. Vehicles were hijacked, relief convoys and warehouses were looted and some expatriate and Somali relief personnel were detained.

In this context, some relief personnel and agencies active in Somalia became increasingly vocal about the need for more effective and forceful action by the international community to ensure that their humanitarian operations could continue.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

Imposing humanitarian challenges remain in Somalia, and while the televised pictures of emaciated children and mass burials captured some of the human drama in Somalia, they could not convey the full scale of catastrophe that befell an entire people. Children have been the most vulnerable, with large numbers of the under-fives now dead. Of those children who survived, many have been left in an extremely weakened condition. In parts of central and southern Somalia, up to 80 per cent of all children under five suffer from severe malnutrition. Women have also been particularly vulnerable, not only from starvation and disease, but also from an upsurge of rapes and robberies.

With increased supplies, agencies say deaths continue to fall from peaks of some 30,000 a month. But insecurity persists and supplies continue to be disrupted and even looted, particularly in areas still beyond UNITAF's areas of operation.

Preparation is already underway on a comprehensive aid coordination plan for 1993 that will focus on relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The plan is due to be ready in early February, ahead of a third DHA coordination conference scheduled for later that month in Addis Ababa in which UN organizations, Somali leaders, international and Somali NGOs and some donor countries will participate. The WFP has already estimated that for the January-April 1993 period, some 114,000 tonnes of food will need to be distributed in Somalia, to cover the needs of 1.8 million Somalis under the most immediate threat. Beyond that, is the task of rehabilitating Somalia's crippled agriculture and other economic infrastructure.

The onset of rains in November, after two years of drought, has given great hope that domestic food production can again be built up. Again, UN agencies and NGOs are already playing a vital role in securing the future. Outside the main areas of conflict, it was possible for the UN agencies to bolster their field staffs and to carry out portions of the 100-day programme, which went far beyond the simple supply of food and medical relief. The ICRC has delivered seeds and other agricultural inputs to 85,000 farming families countrywide, and also carried out livestock vaccination campaigns to protect the surviving herds, while the FAO, WHO, UNICEF and Oxfam delivered seeds to 41,000 families in time for the crop season. In addition, access to primary health care improved and a measles vaccination campaign was launched by NGOs and UNICEF, which also undertook water and sanitation projects in some rural areas and in camps for displaced people.

The concern to address longer-term recovery issues during current relief activities was reflected during Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson's September 1992 visit to Somalia when UNDP decided on the spot to establish offices in Mogadishu and Hargeisa, and proceeded on such tasks as the rehabilitation of Mogadishu's heavily damaged water supply system. In late December, after weeks of work, the system was back in operation.

The particular importance of addressing longer-term economic rehabilitation and development problems in the earlier stages of the relief operation was also stressed at a 3-5 December UN coordinating conference in Addis Ababa on humanitarian assistance to Somalia, with speakers emphasizing the need for Somalis to regain their livelihoods and be less dependent on continuing outside assistance. Unless this is done, it was pointed out, famine may remain a recurrent problem. "It is clear that unless emergency assistance is seen within the context of rehabilitation and reconstruction," stated Mr. Layashi Yaker, Executive-Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), "it will remain an exercise in futility."

IV. A TROUBLED LEGACY

When the independent Somali Republic was formed in July 1960, from a merger of the former British and Italian Somalilands, many thought the country had a solid foundation for political stability. Not all Somali-speakers lived within the borders of the new state — large communities also resided in neighbouring Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya. But practically everyone within Somalia was of Somali origin, speaking the same language, following the same religion, Islam, and practicing similar cultural traditions. This was in stark contrast to virtually all other African countries, which have societies composed of multiple linguistic and religious groups.

For the first nine years of independence, Somalia was governed under a parliamentary system, which became marked by a plethora of parties (up to 60 at some points), fleeting political coalitions and occasional violence, including assassinations of office-holders and candidates. The system proved to be highly unstable, one reason lying in the realities of Somalia's social structure. For beneath the apparent uniformity at the national level, Somali society was divided, not only by social and occupational stratifications and differences between urban and rural sectors, but especially by the clan forms of social organization to which most Somalis belong. The clans are comprised of family aggregations that trace their relations back many generations and traditionally inhabit specific territories, with control of pasturelands and wells being especially important. Traditional authority rested with elders and chiefs, who continued to wield influence after independence.

According to some classifications, there are five major clan groupings: the Darod (35 per cent of the population within Somalia), the Hawiye (23 per cent), the Isaaq (23 per cent), the Dighil and Rahanwein (11 per cent) and the Dir (7 per cent). Each are themselves divided by sub-clan and even smaller divisions.

In the past, clans and sub-clans sometimes clashed over control of territory, pasturelands and wells. Disputes were settled through mediation by the elders and by a system of compensation. With the establishment of a central state, these traditional mechanisms of conflict-resolution were marginalized, while competition for political positions and state resources became a new element affecting inter-clan relations. In the parliamentary period of the 1960s, for example, clan tensions were reflected to some extent in the divisions among the various political parties. Some national political leaders tried to contain and regulate this clan competition by emphasizing Somali nationalism.

In October 1969, Somalia's military, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Siad Barre, carried out a coup and banned all political parties. By the mid-1970s a single-party state had been created. The role of the central government was increased further by the state-centred economic policies President Barre introduced in this period, while the military itself was greatly expanded. The official ideology emphasized socialist terminology and included an intense campaign to promote a broader Somali nationalism to supplant clan loyalties, through propaganda, literacy drives in the Somali language, the outlawing of outward expressions of clan allegiance and a renewed emphasis on "recovering" Somali-inhabited areas of neighbouring countries.

In 1977, Somalia's claims to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia led to a bitter and costly war between the two countries. Despite initial territorial gains, the Somali forces were driven back early the following year. The war high-

Somalia's major clan groups

lighted the reach of Cold War conflict into the Horn of Africa: Somalia had benefited from Soviet military assistance prior to the Ogaden war, at a time when Ethiopia was obtaining support from the US. In a remarkable switch of alliances, the US then became Somalia's chief arms supplier, while Ethiopia obtained large quantities of Soviet bloc armaments. As a result Somalia became even more militarized, with a large army and extensive weapons stocks that later served to fuel the civil war.

"There are more arms than food in Somalia," Mr. Boutros-Ghali recently commented. "These arms were not fabricated by Somalis ... they were given by the outside world, to serve outside interests. Those who provide arms are partners in the crime."

The ready access to arms in Somalia further undermined the mediating role of the traditional elders and facilitated the descent into civil war that followed the sharpening of inter-clan tensions during the 1980s. Faced with initial signs of political dissidence in the aftermath of the Ogaden War, including an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1978, President Siad Barre abandoned the earlier policy of sharing out official jobs among most major clan families. There was a growing tendency to rely on three sub-clans within the Darod grouping, the Marehan, Ogaden and Dulbahante, to which Siad Barre and his closest relatives belonged. This, Somali analysts argue, served to poison clan relations throughout the country, as members of other clan groupings grew resentful and mobilized, along clan lines, in opposition to the government.

Somalia profile: 1990

Population:†	7.5 million	
Land area:	638 sq. km.	
Cultivated area:	1.6% of land area	
Share of GDP:	Livestock production: 47% Manufacturing: 5%	
Major exports[1]**:**	Livestock products: 60% Bananas: 40%	
	Somalia	**Africa**
GNP per capita	$120	$340
Debt/GNP	283.4%	89.8%
ODA per capita	$65	$41
Daily calorie supply	1,932	2,360
Life expectancy	47 years	54 years
Adult literacy	24%	50%
Under-5 mortality	215	167
Access to safe water[2]	37%	44%*
Access to health care[3]	27%	52%*

1. 1987. 2. 1988-90. 3. 1985-88. †. Pre-crisis estimate. *Sub-Saharan Africa only.
Source: FAO, OECD, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, World Bank.

With the single party system overseen by Siad Barre intolerant of any dissent, mounting opposition either developed in exile or took the form of armed insurgency. In 1981 a group of exiles formed the Somali National Movement (SNM), drawing support from members of the Isaaq clan, who predominate in the northwest. Their resentments had been exacerbated by the resettlement in the north of hundreds of thousands of mainly Ogadeni refugees from Ethiopia, some of whom were given Isaaq properties or conscripted to fight against the Isaaq. These tensions eventually precipitated the outbreak of open warfare, marked by the 1988 destruction of Hargeisa.

Over 1988-90, other clan-based political factions and/or armed groups also emerged: the USC among the Hawiye; the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) among the Mijjerteyn sub-clan of the Darod (some of whose leaders had been involved in the 1978 coup attempt); the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) in southern Somalia, with support from Ogadeni Darods who had become estranged from the government; and the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), with a base among the Rahanwein-Dighil, many of whom are settled farmers.

AMONG THE POOREST OF THE POOR

Somalia is one of the poorest nations in the world, classified by the UN as a "least developed country" (LDC). Large but sparsely populated, with a population roughly estimated at more than 7 million, it had an annual per capita gross national product of just $120 in 1990, lying at the lower rungs of the LDC category.

Even before the devastation and suffering brought by the civil war, conditions for most Somalis were extremely difficult. The UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) estimates in its 1992 *State of World Rural Poverty* report that 3.2 million — or 70 per cent of rural Somalis — were living below the poverty line in 1988. At 127 per 1,000 live births, Somalia's infant mortality rate in 1990 was one of the highest in the world. Average life expectancy was just 47 years. Less than a fifth of all school-age children were attending school, while the adult literacy rate was barely 25 percent. Though dismal, many of these figures nevertheless represented some social progress since the establishment of the independent state of Somalia in 1960, and in a few areas the gains have been significant. In 1984, for example, there was one physician for every 5,500 Somalis, compared to one for every 36,800 people in 1965.

The poverty of Somalia's people is explained in part by the country's extremely underdeveloped and fragile economy. About half of the population are nomadic pastoralists, depending on livestock for their livelihoods — one of the highest proportions for any country in the world. Camel and cattle production contributes about 47 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and livestock exports bring in over 60 per cent of official foreign earnings, though actual figures are in doubt, because of widespread smuggling. Grazing over more than 50 million hectares of rangelands, Somalia's herds, prior to their decimation, were already approaching the limits of the land's carrying capacity.

Somalia: economic indicators

	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
GDP at 1987 prices($ millions)	820	930	964	1,023	1,010	1,037	1,022
Real GDP growth (%)	-4.2	8.1	3.7	6.1	-1.3	2.7	-1.5
Merchandise exports ($mn)	133	91	95	94	58	61	58
Merchandise imports ($mn)	402	331	334	350	234	352	211
Current account balance ($mn)	-136	-103	-126	-114	-101	-153	-81
Banana production ('000 tonnes)	60	70	74	80	115	105	110
Cattle slaughtered ('000 head)	410	525	578	600	456	480	515
Total external debt ($mn)	660	1,639	1,800	2,009	2,086	2,159	2,366
Debt service ratio (%)	4.9	15.7	65.7	39.5	9.2	47.6	11.7
Official development assistance per capita ($)	93	66	92	101	73	69	65
Exchange rate (shillings per dollar)	6.3	42.5	90.5	100.0	270.0	929.5	n.a.
Food production per capita (1979-81=100)	98	96	93	93	94	93	88
Maize production ('000 tonnes)	111	382	336	282	353	299	315
Sorghum production ('000 tonnes)	136	280	251	203	235	334	250

Sources: UNDP/World Bank, *Africa Development Indicators 1992*; FAO, *Production Yearbook 1991*; IMF, *International Statistics Yearbook 1992*; OECD, *Development Cooperation: 1992 Report*; n.a. = not available

A quarter of Somalia's people are settled farmers, producing largely for subsistence, but also for the market (bananas for export and sugar, sorghum and maize mainly for the domestic market). Crop production contributes about 13 per cent to GDP. With a climate that is arid and semi-arid, and with good rainfall in only a few areas of the country, cultivation is confined to about 1 million hectares (1.6 per cent of the total land area). Between 50,000 and 100,000 hectares around the Shebelle and Juba rivers in the south — the only two permanent rivers in the country — benefit from seasonal flood irrigation. The Bardera dam project, uncompleted at the outbreak of the civil war, could help irrigate another 240,000 hectares in the Juba Valley.

The vulnerability of Somalia's livestock and crop sectors — and thus of the people who depend on them — has been worsened by the country's susceptibility to drought. On average, moderate droughts occur every 3-4 years and major ones every 8-10 years.

With living from the land so difficult, a significant number of Somalis — possibly as many as 180,000 — have traditionally migrated to look for work, particularly in the Middle East. Manufacturing has been little developed, contributing only about 5 per cent of GDP. Dominated by public enterprises, the sector has been plagued by obsolete equipment, shortages of raw materials, irregular energy supply, uncertain foreign exchange and inefficient and corrupt management.

However, some progress was made during the 1980s in expanding the country's rudimentary physical infrastructure, largely through public investment. Urban and rural water supplies were developed, roads were rehabilitated, improvements were undertaken at the ports and airports and the telecommunications system was modernized.

Estimates on the growth of Somalia's economy vary considerably. World Bank figures indicate that the real GDP growth rate averaged 2 per cent over 1980-88, but official Somali government estimates placed it at just 0.9 per cent a year between 1979 and 1988. According to the latter estimates, this translated into a 19.4 per cent decline in GDP per capita over the same period, since the Somali population had meanwhile increased by an average 3.1 per cent a year. Figures based on Somalia's official national accounts, however, probably underestimate the country's economic performance because of the extent of unrecorded trade in livestock and unofficial migrant remittances.

While probably quite large, migrant labour remittances and unrecorded livestock export earnings were still insufficient to keep the country from becoming increasingly dependent on external financing. The gap was made up by external loans and official development assistance (ODA), with aid alone contributing between $300 mn and $400 mn a year during the 1980s. By 1989, aid receipts were equivalent to 37 per cent of GDP, the sixth highest in sub-Saharan Africa.

Because of the new loans it received and the difficulties it experienced in keeping up with repayment schedules, Somalia's total foreign debt more than tripled during the 1980s, from $664 mn to $2.04 bn. By 1990, arrears of interest payments had risen to over $250 mn, from only $8 mn in 1980, and actual servicing of $11 mn, was equivalent to only 10 per cent of debt due.

During the 1980s, the Somali government intermittantly introduced some economic policy reforms, with the support of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Somali shilling was devalued drastically, tight fiscal and monetary policies were introduced, agricultural pricing and marketing were liberalized and the economy, overall, moved in a more market-oriented direction. With improved price incentives, there was some increase in agricultural output. But austerity also brought reduced government expenditure on health and education; the impact was especially pronounced in primary education, where the estimated school-going rate had fallen to 15 per cent in 1988, from a peak of 59 per cent in 1973.

V. THE TASKS AHEAD

There is cautious optimism about the situation in Somalia for the first time in years, buoyed by the political accords reached on 15 January by the Somali political movements brought together in Addis Ababa by the UN Secretary-General. The decrease in political violence and the substantial improvement in the distribution of food and other emergency supplies since the deployment of the international force, and the agreement to hold a national reconciliation conference on 15 March in Addis Ababa augur well for the future, as does the return of the rains.

To help the Somalis succeed will require a long-term commitment of support from the international community on a numer of fronts, including the reconstruction of civil society, the rehabilitation of the economy and, of course, continued emergency relief. Plans for the latter will be formulated in late February at the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs' third coordinating conference in Addis Ababa, attended by Somali groups, aid agencies and NGOs.

AP/Lynne Sladky

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (right) and Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi chaired the opening session of the January meeting on Somalia in Addis Ababa.

But the often difficult negotiations in Addis Ababa between the 14 Somali groups reflected the difficulties that lie ahead: the 4-5 January meeting kept on being extended beacause of repeated disagreements and only concluded on 15 January. There is also no guarantee that the signed accords will survive the further intense negotiations that lie ahead. In addition, the Somali National Movement (SNM) which has proclaimed an "independent Somaliland" was not a signatory io the accords (but has been urged by the others to participate in the reconciliation conference).

Nevertheless, the fact that the groups were able to agree on issues as contentious as a cease-fire, general disarmament and the holding of a reconciliation conference is a major achievement, as was the decision by the Somali groups to take on the responsibility of implementing the accords themselves. They were also able to elect for the January meeting their own chairmen, Gen. Mohamed Aidid, Mr. Ali Mahdi and Gen. Omar Hagi Mohamed Hersi.

In the immediate future the success of domestic political negotiations will depend on the continuation of a climate of security. Continued progress on that front will depend on a smooth transfer from the US-led force to one under UN command, a sensitive process still under negotiation. There also lies ahead the massive task of distributing hundreds of thousands of tons of relief supplies, which can be a daunting challenge even when disaster hits a highly industrialized country with no security problems. But at least the massive task of rebuilding Somalia has begun.

Somali political movements

Groups attending January Addis Ababa meeting

- Somali Africans Muki Organization (SAMO), Mr. Mohamed Ramadan Arbow, Chairman
- Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA), Mr. Mohamed Farah Abdullahi, Chairman
- Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), Mr. Abdi Muse Mayow, Chairman; Col. Mohamed Nur Aliyou, Chairman (sna)
- Somali National Democratic Union (SNDU), Mr. Ali Ismael Abdi, Chairman
- Somali National Front (SNF), Gen. Omar Hagi Mohamed Hersi, Chairman
- Somali National Movement (SNM), Mr. Abdirahman Ahmed Ali, Chairman
- Somali National Union (SNU), Dr. Mohamed Ragis Mohamed, Chairman
- Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), Gen. Aden Abdillahi Noor, Chairman
- Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) (sna), Col. Ahmed Omar Jess, Chairman
- Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Gen. Mohamed Abshir Musse, Chairman
- Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM) (sna) Col. Abdi Warsame Isaaq, Chairman
- United Somali Congress (USC) (sna) Gen. Mohamed Farah Aidid, Chairman
- United Somali Congress (USC), Mr. Mohamed Qanyare Afrah, Chairman
- United Somali Front (USF), Mr. Abdurahman Dualeh Ali, Chairman
- United Somal Party (USP), Mr. Mohamed Abd Hashi, Chairman

(sna) = member of Somalia National Alliance

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